It is worth noting that Chapman (1991) in listing many of these names, inadvertently attributed to Mueller (1866) two combinations that were never actually made, "Stenocarpus sinuosus F.Muell. var. latifolium F.Muell." and "S. sinuosus var. sectus F.Muell." Mueller actually described these taxa as varieties of S. moorei F.Muell., which is now considered synonymous with S. salignus R.Br. The Chapman combinations are at best invalid, not accepted by the author (he stated in the Introduction, p.xii, to the Australian Plant Name Index that he did not intend to make any formal nomenclatural actions). They are probably best treated as orthographic variants.

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What is the gender of *Sphenotoma* (Epacridaceae)?

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The generic name *Sphenotoma* for a genus of 6–7 Western Australian Epacridaceae has been variously treated as feminine or neuter by different authors. The name was derived from two Greek words : *spheno* (m.) to connect or bind together, and *tomos* (m.) a slice or section. The gender of the compound word is fixed by the final part. So notionally the name is masculine. In Latin, *tomus* (book, volume, from the same root) is also masculine. So on the face of it, the generic name *Sphenotoma* should be masculine.

However the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* (Art. 62.1) states that gender of generic names is assigned by botanical tradition. That is, if the original author assigned the wrong gender and everyone followed him, then that overrides classical usage. What happened with *Sphenotoma*?

Sweet (1828) described only a single species *S. gracilis*. What does that say about the gender he was assigning? Unfortunately 'gracilis' is a Group B adjective (Stearn 1992)) and the ending can signify either masculine or feminine gender, but not neuter (which would be *S. gracile*).

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What did later authors do?

Lindley (1832) made the combination *S. capitatum* (neuter)

Don (1834) made the combination *S. squarrosa* (feminine)

Sonder (1845) made the combination *S. dracophylloides* (masculine, femine or neuter)

Mueller (1883) made the combination *S. drummondii* (genitive, not relevant) and the combination *S. parviflorum* (neuter)

Bentham (1869) put *Sphenotoma* in synonymy under *Dracophyllum* but gave the synonymous names neuter endings.

Jackes (1970) and Newbey (1970) both treated it as neuter.

Recent Western Australian checklists and censuses have treated *Sphenostoma* as neuter (see for example, Green, 1985; Paczkowska & Chapman, 2000); FloraBase website)

APNI (Australian National Herbarium et al. 2004) treats the names as feminine (except 116631 *Sphenotoma gracile* (n.) which was taken from a WA source), following Arthur Chapman (1991).

Watson & Dallwitz (2005) use the name *Sphenotoma gracile*, i.e., neuter.

Historical usage in Australia is thus ambiguous, although there is a tendency to treat the name as neuter, particularly in Western Australia where it grows. What about usage of *-toma* in other genera?

Within the Australian flora I can find only two other examples, *Crossotoma* (= *Scaevola*) and *Isotoma* in Goodeniaceae.

Unfortunately the only two taxa in *Crossotoma* are *C. oleoides* and *C. spinescens*, both of which have the same endings irrespective of gender, and are thus completely inconclusive.

Isotoma seems to have been fairly consistently treated as feminine, with about seven epithets ending in -a (the remainder are either genitive, or end in -is).

A search in *Index Nominum Genericorum* revealed only 23 generic names (excluding *Sphenotoma*) which were unequivocally compounds with a final part *-toma*. This seems to be a relatively rare construction in vascular plants but more common in algae. Of the 23 examples, 14 adopted a clear feminine gender, 4 adopted neuter gender, 1 was either masculine or feminine, and 4 were inconclusive (as for *Crossotoma*). Interestingly, *Polytoma* has been treated as feminine, as has *Parapolytoma*, but *Metapolytoma* is treated as neuter!

In summary, although the source words in the generic name are masculine, almost no-one treats the compound as masculine. The original author treated it as either masculine or feminine, the next author as feminine, and thereafter the usage became ambiguous, tending towards neuter. Parallel constructions in other families strongly favour treating it as feminine. This has the added benefit of the generic and specific epithets (Group A adjectives) both ending in 'a' (e.g. *Sphenotoma squarrosa*) rather than, if neuter, having mixed 'a/um' endings (e.g. *Sphenotoma squarrosum*) which many find confusing.

The weight of priority, usage, custom and aesthetics suggest that *Sphenotoma* should be treated as feminine.

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Xylomelum benthamii Orchard, a replacement name for *Xylomelum salicinum* (Meisn.) Benth., nom. illeg. (Proteaceae)

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The name of this Queensland taxon was based on *Xylomelum salicinum* A.Cunn. ex R.Br. (1830), a name mentioned only in synonymy, and thus invalid. It was validated as *X. pyriforme* β *salicinum* Meisn. (Meisner 1856). Bentham (1870) raised it to species status as "*X. salicinum* A.Cunn. in R.Br." (and incidentally was the first to give Meisner's name the formal rank of variety), but unfortunately cited *X. scottianum* in synonymy. The

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